17. Expresses grave concern over the ecological and human health consequences of the failure to undertake maintenance of sewage treatment facilities, and in particular calls on all parties to facilitate access to the goods needed for the repair and reconstruction of the Beit Lahia plant, as identified by the Special Envoy for the Quartet;

18. Calls for an urgent and exemplary energy project for Gaza, possibly in the Rafah area, in order to guarantee autonomy and self-sufficiency in electricity production and desalinisation for the population;

19. Invites its Working Group on the Middle East to examine, in cooperation with the Commission and the international organisations concerned, the consequences of the destruction of the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, with special regard to the facilities financed within the framework of the humanitarian aid or project financing provided by the European Union;

20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Secretary-General, the Special Envoy for the Middle East Quartet, the President of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, the President of the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Israeli Government, the Knesset, and the Egyptian Government and Parliament.

Seventh Human Rights Council of the United Nations

P6_TA(2008)0065

European Parliament resolution of 21 February 2008 on the seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

(2009/C 184 E/11)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights since 1996, in particular its resolution of 7 June 2007 on the fifth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) ([1]), as well as those of 16 March 2006 on the outcome of the negotiations on the Human Rights Council and on the 62nd session of the UNCHR ([2]), of 29 January 2004 on the relations between the European Union and the United Nations ([3]), of 9 June 2005 on the reform of the United Nations ([4]), of 29 September 2005 on the outcome of the United Nations World Summit of 14-16 September 2005 ([5]) and of 26 April 2007 on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2006 and the EU's policy on the matter ([6]),

— having regard to its urgent resolutions on human rights and democracy,

— having regard to United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/251 establishing the Human Rights Council (UNHRC),

— having regard to the previous regular and special sessions of the UNHRC, in particular to the sixth regular session, as well as the sixth special session on 'Human rights violations emanating from Israeli military attacks and incursions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Occupied Gaza Strip', held on 23-24 January 2008,

— having regard to the forthcoming seventh session of the UNHRC, to be held in March 2008,

([1]) Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0235.
([2]) OJ C 291 E, 30.11.2006, p. 409.
([3]) OJ C 96 E, 21.4.2004, p. 79.
([4]) OJ C 124 E, 25.5.2006, p. 549.
([5]) OJ C 227 E, 21.9.2006, p. 582.
([6]) Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0165.

Thursday 21 February 2008

— having regard to the first and second rounds of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to be held from 7 to 18 April 2008 and from 5 to 16 May 2008,

— having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas respect for, and the promotion and safeguarding of, the universality of human rights is part of the European Union's ethical and legal *acquis* and one of the cornerstones of European unity and integrity,

B. whereas the UNHRC provides an effective platform for strengthening human rights protection and promotion within the UN framework,

C. whereas the seventh session of the UNHRC will be crucial, as it will be the first to examine a wide range of substantive issues under the new working methods stemming from the institution-building reforms adopted in 2006 and 2007 and will fine-tune the modalities of the UPR,

D. whereas the credibility of the UNHRC rests on the implementation of these reforms and mechanisms in a way which will strengthen its ability to address human rights violations around the world,

E. whereas an ad hoc European Parliament delegation will be established for the seventh session of the UNHRC, as in the two previous years and, before that, for the UNHRC's predecessor, the UN Commission on Human Rights,

The work of the Human Rights Council

1. Underlines the crucial role of the Human Rights Council in the overall UN architecture; reiterates the view that its focus should remain primarily on addressing human rights violations, as general political situations fall within the competence of other UN bodies; stresses the specific characteristics of the UNHRC, namely the important role of Special Procedures, the special sessions, the UPR, the interactive dialogue and its capacity to address urgent crises;

2. Takes note of the results of the UNHRC's work; welcomes the fulfilment of the ambitious programme the UNHRC set itself, which included the review of its procedures and working methods, in particular the development and implementation of the UPR and the review of Special Procedures;

3. Pays tribute to the positive achievements of the UNHRC presidency and in particular its good cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR); calls on the EU to support as a matter of priority candidates with high standards of integrity standing for election as the new President of the UNHRC in the ballot to be held on 23 June 2008;

4. Welcomes the organisation of special sessions, as they constitute essential links between serious human rights violations and independent expertise; is concerned, however, at the failure of the UNHRC to take action to address many of the world's most urgent human rights violations;

5. Notes that the purpose of special sessions is to address urgent crises, while persistent human rights violations should be addressed in regular session, allowing for a more in-depth analysis and providing solutions for the long term;

6. Stresses that special sessions require prior preparation and structured working methods to produce a positive outcome; in this regard, notes the success of key EU initiatives;

7. Notes the direct impact of the special session on Burma, held in Geneva in October 2007, which resulted in the condemnation of government repression and the visit of the Special Rapporteur with a view to investigating the human rights situation in Burma; deplores the lack of follow-up to, and monitoring of, the Special Rapporteur's recommendations, as the human rights situation is worsening in Burma;

United Nations General Assembly election of new members of the UNHRC

8. Calls for competitive elections to be held in all regions, in May 2008, in order to provide real choice among UN Member States; regrets that some countries with problematic human rights records have so far been elected, since this means that slates have been wiped clean;

9. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to continue to press for the establishment of membership criteria for election to the UNHRC, including the issuing of standing invitations to Special Procedures, as well as for monitoring of the actual implementation of the UN Member States' election pledges; pending such a reform, calls for this rule to be applied in determining the support of EU Member States in the UNHRC for candidate countries;

Procedures and mechanisms

UPR

10. Regards the UPR mechanism as a potential means of improving the universality of monitoring of human rights commitments and practices throughout the world by subjecting all UN Member States to equal treatment and scrutiny;

11. Points out that the aim of the UPR is to conduct an objective review of a country situation in order to identify areas of human rights violations which could be improved through the exchange of good practices and enhanced cooperation leading to recommendations and conclusions; in this regard, calls on EU Member States and the Commission to take these recommendations and conclusions into account when defining the objectives and priorities of EU assistance programmes;

12. Calls for the UPR process, the first and second rounds of which will be held from 7 to 18 April 2008 and from 5 to 16 May 2008, to live up to the expectations voiced so far; calls on EU Member States to conduct UPR transparently and objectively and in the spirit of the abovementioned Resolution 60/251; calls on EU Member States subjected to UPR to be self-critical and not limit their presentations to listing their positive achievements;

13. Notes that a number of questions still need to be addressed, including the selection of what are termed 'UPR Troikas' which will facilitate review of the UN Member States in the field of human rights; in this regard, urges EU Member States not to accept the possibility of the confidential refusal by countries under review of the selection of countries in charge of their review;

14. Calls on UNHRC members to appoint independent experts as their representatives on the working group in charge of conducting the UPR; calls on EU Member States to take the lead in promoting such an approach by adopting common guidelines on UPR modalities;

15. Notes the importance of the involvement of civil society, human rights defenders and Special Procedures; reiterates its view that the conclusions and recommendations thereof should constitute the basis for an independent and credible review;

Review of mandates and nomination of Special Procedures mandate holders

16. Stresses that Special Procedures are at the core of the UN human rights machinery, playing a critical role in the Human Rights Council in particular; reaffirms the need for UNHRC members to comply with their obligation to cooperate fully in connection with Special Procedures;

17. Stresses that the credibility of the UNHRC will depend on the new nominations for Special Procedures mandate holders in March 2008;

18. Calls for the nomination, as mandate holders, of persons with recognised human rights expertise, relevant experience, independence, impartiality, personal integrity and objectivity as well as substantial knowledge of the Special Procedures system;

19. Urges governments, NGOs and relevant professional associations to send the names of eligible candidates for inclusion in the public roster of eligible candidates managed by the OHCHR;

Thursday 21 February 2008

20. Calls on the Consultative Group in charge of reviewing candidates for Special Procedures mandates and making recommendations for appointments to the Presidency of the Council to fulfil its mandate in an objective and transparent manner and to base its choices on the criteria of professionalism and personal integrity;

21. Condemns the Human Rights Council's decision not to renew the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on Belarus and Cuba;

22. Welcomes the renewal of the country mandates of the Special Rapporteur on Sudan and of the Independent Experts on Liberia, Haiti and Burundi;

23. Regrets the EU's support for the UNHRC's decision to disband its expert group on Darfur; notes that the follow-up to the work of the group of experts has been added to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Sudan; is therefore concerned that her mandate may be weakened by the increase in her workload;

24. Given their important added value, encourages the exercise of greater circumspection in the discontinuance of the mandates of expert groups in the future;

25. Welcomes the renewal of the thematic mandates reviewed so far;

26. Calls on the EU Member States to ensure renewal of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on Burma and on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and extension of the mandates of the Independent Experts on Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

27. Welcomes the creation of an expert mechanism, with five independent members, on the human rights of indigenous peoples;

28. Encourages the holding, as soon as possible and at all events during 2008, of discussions on the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations, and the setting of priorities for addressing this issue in the UNHRC's future efforts and work programmes, as agreed in General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/143 of 19 December 2006 on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women;

29. Notes the adoption, on 18 June 2007, of a Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate Holders; calls on the UNHRC to implement this Code of Conduct in the spirit of the abovementioned Resolution 60/251 and to respect the independence of Special Procedures;

30. Supports the efforts of the Coordination Committee of Special Procedures in drafting the appropriate procedure by which the Code of Conduct and other relevant documents, including the Manual of Special Procedures, may be best implemented in such a way as to strengthen their ability to protect and promote human rights; calls on the Special Procedures Coordination Committee to work in an efficient and transparent manner in order to avoid technical debates which could delay substantive debates and hamper the mandates of Special Procedures;

Complaint procedure

31. Notes that the complaint procedure outlined as part of the UNHRC's institution-building process appears to be very similar to the former '1503 procedure'; calls for a new process which will be more effective in identifying, preventing and addressing situations of manifest gross human rights violations;

EU involvement

32. Recognises the active involvement of the EU and its Member States in the first year of work of the UNHRC;

33. Welcomes the involvement of the EU in the difficult negotiations at the sixth regular session which sought, in particular, to achieve positive results regarding the renewal of the Special Procedures mandates;

34. Points to the need for the EU to speak with one voice in addressing human rights issues, but also to the fact that it is important for each EU Member State to voice the EU position, in order to give it more weight;

35. Calls on the EU to sponsor its own resolution seeking consensus in addressing the current violations of human rights in relation to the blockade on Gaza and rocket attacks against Israel;

36. Calls for enhanced cooperation with the OHCHR and for its independence to be preserved by granting it adequate funding;

37. Calls for ongoing support for Special Procedures in terms of finance and staff; expresses its support for the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights ([1]), as this is an important source of financing for Special Procedures; welcomes the initiatives of the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM) presidency to enhance its cooperation with Special Rapporteurs, notably by means of systematic invitations to relevant meetings;

38. Calls on the Commission and the Council to adopt a 'common position' designed to ensure that EU Member States automatically sign and ratify all international human rights instruments;

39. Notes the EU's work in favour of the adoption of resolutions by consensus; calls on the EU Member States to pursue their efforts to engage with countries from other regional groups with a view to guaranteeing broad support for resolutions which strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights; calls on the EU to make more effective use of its aid to and political support for third countries, so as to give them an incentive to cooperate with the UNHRC;

40. Mandates the European Parliament delegation to the seventh session of the UNHRC to voice the concerns expressed in this resolution, calls on the delegation to report to the Subcommittee on Human Rights on its visit, and considers it appropriate to continue sending a European Parliament delegation to relevant sessions of the UNHRC;

*
* *

41. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the UN Security Council, the UN Secretary-General, the President of the 62nd UN General Assembly, the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the EU-UN working group established by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

([1]) Regulation (EC) No 1889/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on establishing a financial instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide (OJ L 386, 29.12.2006, p. 1).

The demographic future of Europe

P6_TA(2008)0066

European Parliament resolution of 21 February 2008 on the demographic future of Europe (2007/2156(INI))

(2009/C 184 E/12)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its resolution of 14 March 1997 on the Commission report to the Council and European Parliament on the demographic situation in the European Union (1995) ([1]),

— having regard to its resolution of 12 March 1998 on the Commission demographic report 1997 ([2]),

([1]) OJ C 115, 14.4.1997, p. 238.
([2]) OJ C 104, 6.4.1998, p. 222.